

Treasured Fragrances Permeate Pervasively

"When I become a Buddha, from the horizon up to the vast void of cosmos, all the palaces, towers, pavilions, ponds, streams, flowers, trees, and the myriad things in my land will all be composed of immeasurable treasured fragrances. The fragrances will universally permeate all worlds in ten directions. Those living beings, upon smelling the fragrances, will cultivate Buddha-conduct. If it is not like this, I will not acquire Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." 43rd Vow: Treasured fragrances permeate pervasively.

According to the verse of this vow, when Amitabha became a Buddha and accomplished Sukhāvati, myriad things in the land are all composed of immeasurable treasured fragrances. What are these fragrances? They are the fragrances of **innate virtues**. When we participated in the *Thrice Yearning Ceremony*, in the beginning of the first period, the Ceremony Master held the incense and chanted, "The roots of this tiny incense coil beyond the kalpas, and its branches spread all over the cosmos." It denotes that this fragrance is neither the fragrance of The Three Realms of **Desire, Form, and Formlessness** nor the ten dharma-realms (***six-paths plus four-saints-realms**). It is the fragrance of self-nature from the **one-true-dharma-realm** (***thusness**). It is not an ordinary substance grown among heaven or earth, it is the treasured fragrance of self-nature.

How can we obtain this fragrance? We must cultivate precepts, samadhi (***meditative mind**), and prajna (***supra worldly wisdom**). According to *The Platform Sutra*, it is "five-part-dharmakāya-fragrance," which is the fragrance perfumed by our practice of precepts, samadhi, prajna, emancipation, and the knowledge of emancipation. In other words, it is the intrinsic treasured fragrance from our self-nature. Only by resonating with self-nature can we smell this kind of fragrance. Myriad things in Sukhāvati are all treasured fragrances **composed** from the **virtues** of self-nature which **permeate** all worlds in ten directions.

If the fragrance is not the **treasured fragrance of innate virtues**, it is impossible to pervasively permeate all worlds in ten directions. Think about it, the incense in our censer, how long can it last and how wide can it **permeate**? **Permeating** the entire house would be great already. In the Tang Dynasty, there was one kind of special **sandalwood incense** brought from India by an eminent monk. When an extremely small bit was burned, everyone in the entire capital city, Chang An, could smell it. That incense, a supreme quality one, cannot be found today. Yet, such a miraculous incense of the past is still not the treasured fragrance mentioned here. Why? It could only **permeate** the entire Chang An city, not all worlds in ten directions.

Speaking and Hearing Dharma through Fragrance

The fragrance mentioned here can permeate all worlds in ten directions. Of course this could not be grown in heaven or earth. It is the fragrance of the virtues in self-nature. "Living beings, upon smelling this fragrance, will cultivate Buddha-conduct." This suggests that, when

all beings smell this wondrous fragrance from Sukhāvātī, they will naturally be pure physically and mentally, and further spontaneously implement all sorts of phenomenal conducts of Buddha's teachings into their daily life.

This fragrance, as stated in *The Avatamsaka Sūtra*, also contains the wondrous virtue of “One is all, all is one.” Through our six senses of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, we are able to contact six-dusts (*some translate as six data-field or six gunas) of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and concept. When our nose contacts the dust of smell, which is very little, we have smelled the fragrance. Even the amount as little as when we breathe in with just one sniff can permeate throughout ten directions. This is the virtue of “One permeates ten directions. One permeates all”—the inconceivable realm of the Avatamsaka Realm. What is even more inconceivable with this fragrance? Not only does it smell good, but amazingly we can also cultivate Buddha-conduct after smelling it. In other words, this fragrance is speaking Dharma to us. The dust of the smell propagates the wondrous Dharma!

This is difficult to comprehend for all beings in our Saha World because we are used to using our ears to listen. The root of our auditory sense hears through the dust of sound, which can speak Dharma to us. Where does the sound come from? I am speaking here, my lungs are pumping the air, causing vibrations. The vibration of the air comes out from my throat, producing the sound waves. The sound waves reach your ears, your eardrums also vibrate, you then hear the sound. **The sound is produced this way.** This is the dust of sound.

After you hear this sound, you learn the Dharma of the Pure Land Method, which teaches us to recite Amitabha. So, the sound itself not only has vibrations but carries messages! At the same time when your eardrums feel the vibration, you have already absorbed the Dharma. That is why all beings who hear the sound will all cultivate Buddha-conduct. What is the Buddha-conduct? Reciting Amitabha with faith and aspiration to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth is Buddha-conduct; Shakyamuni Buddha relied on this to attain Buddhahood, so did Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

The Ear Is Smarter Than the Eye

In our Saha World, the root of the auditory sense of all beings is the sharpest. Among the roots of our six senses, the ear is smartest, smarter than the eyes. The eyes can only see things in front, not behind. But the ears can hear sounds from the front and the back. If someone is talking behind me, I can hear as clearly as if he is talking in front of me. Even between a wall, you can also hear very clearly, the sound wave would not be impeded. Our eyes cannot see things with even a piece of paper blocking it. Isn't the root of the sense of our ears smarter than that of our eyes?

The root of our ears is also smarter than the roots of our other senses. Therefore, the Buddha manifested in our world, He used sound to implement **Buddha-tasks**. He let us use the root of our ears to listen to Dharma, so Shakyamuni Buddha did not write a book. Ancient sages

mostly imparted wisdom by using sound to give classes. Confucius did not have many written works throughout his life. *The Analects* was recorded by his disciples through the classes he offered. Shakyamuni Buddha was even more like this, He never established written words.

But where did the sutras come from? Venerable Ananda followed the Buddha for many years, he remembered all of the Buddha's teachings. After the Buddha went to nirvana, he started **to gather and recount the Buddha's words to form the sutras**. We must understand this truth, so as to make good use of the root of our ears to listen to sutra teachings. Nowadays, it is convenient to listen to sutra teachings. We may not see Dharma-teachers in person, but we can listen online or carry a compact player with us everywhere to listen. There is no problem listening for even ten hours a day. We can use the root of our ears to **ingest Dharma through listening to the sutra teachings**.

Delicious Food Conveys the Dharma

The spiritual capacity of all beings in each land is different, the expediency that Buddhas use is thus different. The auditory sense of the living beings in other worlds is not necessarily the sharpest. For example, in *Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa Sūtra*, when Vimalakīrti Mahasattva showed illness, mahasattvas of all Buddha lands came to see him. There were bodhisattvas from the Fragrance Land, Vimalakīrti Mahasattva asked them, “How does the **Tathagata of the Fragrance Land** impart Dharma?”

The roots of the nose and tongue of all beings in the Fragrance Land are very sharp, so the Buddha of the Fragrance Land uses fragrance and flavor to impart Dharma to them. How? By making a delicious meal for them. The dust of smell carries the messages of Dharma just like the dust of sound carries the messages of Dharma in our world, people in the Fragrance Land receive the Dharma upon smelling it. Look! This Dharma is this **fragrance!** They understand it and will even comprehend deeper after eating it. To liberate all beings of the Fragrance Land, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas make delicious meals for them every day.

Amitabha's Vows mention light, sound, and fragrance. The Vow of "The light shines throughout ten directions" is regarding the dust of form. The Vow of "Praises from all Buddhas" refers to the dust of sound. And the Vow of "Treasured fragrance permeates pervasively" is with respect to the dust of smell. Despite only three being mentioned among the six dusts, Amitabha's Vows in fact include all six dusts.

We now know that all six dusts in Sukhāvātī speak Dharma, and they also pervade immeasurable Buddha worlds in ten directions. Its fragrance and flavor are permeating, **so are the touch and concept**. **How does the dust of concept permeate ten directions?** It enters into all beings' minds. This is very difficult for us to cogitate and imagine. Simply put, it is because all worlds in ten directions are the realm of non-obstruction.

We Will Smell the Fragrance of the Self-Nature When Resonating with Bodhi

In our world, many people have very well-functioning noses, some even **receive blessing responses when resonating with bodhi**. For instance, when you are reading sutras at home very sincerely and respectfully, all of a sudden, you seem to smell a wondrous fragrance. Where does it come from? You smell it at that time, but you neither stop nor **think about it**. However, the more you read, the more you smell it. Where does the fragrance come from?

Finally, you feel that you really should find out because it is too rare. You stop reading and look for it but cannot find it. Why? Because that fragrance is not the incense you burned. You did not burn incense, yet you really smelled it. It is very possible that it is the wondrous fragrance of Sukhāvātī from Buddha's blessing to enhance your faith. But, once your heart moves and you give rise to thoughts, you **strive to look for a connection**, the fragrance will then disappear. Many people have experienced this situation.

The treasured fragrance of the innate virtues can only be smelled when you are unmoved and do not give rise to thoughts. Once your heart moves and you give rise to thoughts, it will be gone. What is best? When you smell it the next time, regard it as if you do not smell it, just ignore it and keep reading your sutra. You know that this is a response **from resonating with the realm**, but you must not keep it in your mind; this would be the best way.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!